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Viewing cable 09QUITO933, Government Appointed Commissioner Warns of Narco-Democracy

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09QUITO933**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09QUITO933	2009-11-05 21:59	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/11/1/1355/cable-233417.html>

VZCZCXYZ0034
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0933/01 3092159
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 052159Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0285
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0101
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000933

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2029/11/05
TAGS: [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: Government Appointed Commissioner Warns of Narco-Democracy

REF: QUITO 227; QUITO 233

CLASSIFIED BY: Hodge...

id: 233417
date: 11/5/2009 21:59
refid: 09QUITO933
origin: Embassy Quito
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination: 09QUITO227|09QUITO233
header:
VZCZCXYZ0034
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0933/01 3092159
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 052159Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0285
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0101
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000933

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: Government Appointed Commissioner Warns of Narco-Democracy

REF: QUITO 227; QUITO 233

CLASSIFIED BY: Hodges, Heather M, Ambassador, State, EXEC; REASON:
1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Francisco Huerta, head of a government-appointed commission investigating the March 2008 Colombian bombing of a FARC camp in Ecuador, warned during October media interviews that Ecuador was becoming a "narco-democracy." A member of Huerta's commission told us on November 4 that the group's report would not agree with GOE allegations of a U.S. role in the attack. If the final report indeed reflects what we have heard so far, we expect the government to distance itself from the report, or discredit the commission. End Summary.

Commission Highlights Narcotrafficker-Government Links

¶2. (SBU) Francisco Huerta's denunciation of the ills of contemporary Ecuador is likely not what the GOE had in mind in appointing him. In support of his charge that Ecuador was on the road to being a narco-democracy, Huerta described Ecuador today as "half democratic" since it had a government chosen by popular vote, but infiltrated by narco-traffickers. Huerta said there had been too many cases of judicial, executive and legislative branch members linked to narco-trafficking, which obviously corrupt a democracy. He asked rhetorically who could compete in election campaigns against those with narco-financing. Huerta noted that impunity was often thanks to complicity by those in the armed forces. He did not hesitate to call the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) terrorists, a designation the GOE has avoided.

13. (SBU) Huerta leads the five-member Truth and Transparency Commission investigating the March 1, 2008, Colombian military attack on a FARC camp in northern Ecuador, as well as the allegations of GOE-FARC ties (Ref A). The Commission is often called the Angostura commission after the town closest to the FARC camp. Huerta was appointed to represent the National Council for Higher Education and was considered left-leaning.

14. (SBU) Responding to Huerta's comments during a BBC interview, President Correa claimed that Huerta was referring to problems near the country's border, where state presence had always been absent and where there were many narcotrafficking routes. He affirmed that the GOE needed to pay attention to the area. When pressed further, Correa highlighted what he considered Ecuador's successes against drugs, including the absence of coca cultivation and the large number of seizures, which he said made it unlikely Ecuador would become a narco-democracy.

15. (C) Commission member Walter Gellibert Larreta told us on November 4 that the influence of narco-traffickers in Ecuador had already been proven. What the Commission was still trying to do was further document the ties between people of the government and the guerrillas. He said the Commission did not yet have a fixed date for the report's release. Larreta was nominated for the commission by the Ecuadorian Association of Radio Broadcasting; as a young man he lived for 11 years in the U.S.

Indicators of a Fledgling Narco-Democracy

16. (C) Other events in recent weeks have added to the impression that narcotics trafficking organizations pose a threat to government institutions. FARC threats were reported against police officers involved in the mid-October capture of 8.3 tons of cocaine

which belonged to a Colombian drug trafficking organization, but with the FARC assisting in transportation and security and an Ecuadorian Army officer heading the transportation cell. Government and Police Minister Gustavo Jalkh said the GOE was taking the necessary measures to protect police officers who were part of operations that put them at high risk. Also, the provincial prosecutor who would have handled the case requested that he be moved, which many observers attributed to his fear of narcotraffickers' retribution.

17. (C) The events described above build on concerns created by reports of former Security Minister Gustavo Larrea and former Under Secretary Jose Chauvin's ties to the FARC (Ref B). In a related development, on October 23 an Esmeraldas judge found the Ostaiza brothers (whom Chauvin cooperated with) and nine other defendants not guilty of drug trafficking in conjunction with the FARC; they are now detained only on a money laundering charge.

U.S. Role in 2008 Colombian Military Incursion

18. (C) According to commission member Larreta, the Commission's report on the Colombian military incursion of March 2008 would include nothing damaging about the U.S. He said the Commission had already completed the drafting of the section of the report about

the attack. Larreta told us the report would conclude that the Colombian military had the capacity to carry out the attack on its own and that there was no evidence to support the allegation that aircraft based at the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL) in Manta had been involved. Larreta noted that one Commission member (unidentified) had insisted on including a statement about a FOL role, but that four other members refused to include an unsubstantiated allegation.

¶9. (SBU) The Ambassador met with Larreta and the other members of the commission (minus Huerta) at their request on April 28 at the start of their investigation. In addition, the Ambassador responded in writing in late July to the Commission's written request for information. The request focused on early U.S. Embassy notification of certain Ecuadorian officials about the Colombian military actions on March 1, 2008, and the capabilities and possible involvement in the attack of FOL aircraft.

Comment

¶10. (C) We are surprised by Huerta's courage in trying to issue a wake-up call to the Ecuadorian public on the dangers of increasing narco trafficker influence over government institutions. If indeed the Commission members stick to their guns and issue a report documenting government officials' links to narcotics traffickers, they would prove wrong the many skeptics who argued that the commission members were too aligned with the government and restricted in the information they would gather to conduct a significant and objective investigation. Furthermore, if the final report absolves the USG, it would counter GOE charges that the USG played a major role in carrying out the March 2008 Colombian attack. We imagine the GOE must be thinking hard about how to prevent such a public relations disaster, or discredit the report.
HODGES

=====CABLE ENDS=====